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“I Know What You Are Doing for Other People Too”: Dutch Journalist Mary Pos Reaches Out to Eleanor Roosevelt

Babs Boter

Mary Pos, the self-proclaimed first female travel journalist from the Netherlands, wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt on 3 December 1937, angling for an invitation to the White House for a book she was writing about her impressions of America. Using her personalized Dutch stationery, she had produced the letter on her travel typewriter while staying at a hotel in Chicago. In broken English, and with no less than ten corrections on the one page, she presented herself as an accomplished and internationally known writer and lecturer with an extensive social and professional

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network of people and carrying significant letters of recommendation. Princess Juliana had granted her a rare interview, she stated, because “she knows about my trips, always alone, many times in difficult [sic] circumstances,” after which the writer elaborated on her visits to the slums in Paris and London.¹

Pos was a clever networker and may have mentioned the slums because she was informed about Roosevelt’s tours of slum areas, as well as her involvement in settlement housework in the New York City slums when she was young.² Another tactic to persuade Roosevelt to invite her was her declaration that through her writings she wished to give the poor “a little relief” and “be able to do something for others by my work.” The Dutch journalist then added: “I know what you are doing for other people too and specially [sic] therefore you can understand how anxious I am to meet you one time in my life.”³ Emphasizing the resemblance of their personal and social ambitions, the Dutch writer from the small Dutch town of Zaandam desperately hoped she could have a personal appointment with the world-famous First Lady. The meeting would, we can imply, offer her inspiration and information, an experience to refer back to when lecturing and writing her travel books but also an encounter to add to her list of meetings with high-ranking public figures who could open doors elsewhere. The long, imploring letter in typescript shows a short and decisive note at the top, written in pencil and directed at Stephen Early, Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s (FDR’s) press secretary: “Mr Early, can she come to press conference” [sic].⁴

Earlier on, in November, Mary Pos had made a first attempt to meet with the President and his wife, but FDR had been ill and Mrs. Roosevelt was out of town. Prudence Shannon, the secretary to Early, had met her at that time and, when she received the new request to arrange for a meeting, sent a warning note to Malvina Thompson Scheider, private secretary and personal aide to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt: “It is my personal opinion that you will have to ‘keep an eye’ on her if she attends the conference—because she strikes me as the kind of person who, if given an inch, will take a mile. This, just for your information.”⁵

Shannon was right: after Pos was informed she could attend a press conference, but would not be allowed to have a personal interview with the First Lady, she wrote again, asking for a private rendezvous. In order to support her request, she included documentation about her work and offered to present Eleanor Roosevelt with “the very simple, but real, Dutch pair of wooden shoes in miniature (one can keep them on his hand)

which I brought with me from my country.”⁶ In the end, it was arranged that Pos would attend both the presidential press conference on Tuesday, 21 December 1937, and the women’s press conference the day after, followed by a short interview with the First Lady, together with a Finnish journalist.

Still, Pos wanted more than even the mile: the day after the women’s press conference, she instructed the Harris and Ewing News Service to send photo portraits to FDR and his wife to be autographed.⁷ When, on 3 January 1938, she had not received the photos back, perhaps failing to take into consideration the Christmas holidays, the Dutch journalist sent a reminder to the First Lady. She pressed her to sign the photo, dedicate it to her, and return it that very same week, as she would travel back to Europe within a few days. In addition, she invited Mrs. Roosevelt to read a *New York Times* article about herself that, she boasted, a well-known American had referred to on the radio. The clipping, which she included in the envelope as both reading assignment and trophy, was entitled “Hollander Finds Us Too Serious: Mary Pos, Writer, Wonders at Few Laughing Faces in midst of Holiday Brightness. Roosevelts the ‘Gayest.’” It expressed, Pos states, “my feelings for you.”⁸ Indeed, the piece quotes Pos as saying: “I have met many important women in the world, but I have never met one so naturally brilliant. She never hesitates in giving an answer, she never speaks a careless word for which she couldn’t take full responsibility. She would make an excellent ambassador for this country anywhere abroad.”⁹ Pos’ reference to the responsible way in which Mrs. Roosevelt answered questions from journalists is ironic: years later, Pos would publicly push Roosevelt to speak about a political issue she did not wish to discuss.¹⁰ Eventually, Mrs. Roosevelt did sign the picture and had her secretary send it back to Pos, but the president, Pos was informed, was too busy. On the Harris and Ewing News Service request was written “Explain to Pos – Doesn’t do it.”¹¹

Mary Pos’ frantic attempts to reach out to Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as her gushing about her in the winter of 1937, are in sharp contrast with her assessment 12 years later. Having met the First Lady in the summer of 1950 during her European tour, she refers to her in her diary as “an unsympathetic business woman.”¹² This chapter examines that change of appraisal. In addition, it shows how Pos’ narratives of her encounters with Eleanor Roosevelt expose the professional and psychological forces at work in the transnational and gendered arena of journalism in the late 1930s and early 1950s. It especially looks at the way in which Pos,

Roosevelt, and other women positioned themselves during Roosevelt's women's only press conferences. Finally, it investigates potential correlations between Roosevelt's and Pos' ideas on women's rights and intercultural understanding.¹³

POPULAR TRAVEL JOURNALIST AND SPEAKER

Mary Pos (1904–1987) was a world traveler, writer, and lecturer. Conversing with Eleanor Roosevelt, on 22 December 1937, she referred to herself as a “world citizen,” and although she did not explicitly use the term “citizen diplomat,” she usually presented herself as such to Roosevelt and others.¹⁴ Inspired at an early age by stories told to her by her father and uncle, both missionaries, she had developed the ambition to play a role in the advancement of intercultural understanding. Her travel accounts in thousands of articles and more than 20 books, as well as the hundreds of lectures all over the Netherlands and abroad, were meant to contribute to crucial connections between peoples and countries. To support her plan, she had worked hard to construct an extensive professional and personal network of notables, diplomats, and businessmen; relatives and acquaintances at home and abroad; and sponsors and admirers who would financially or otherwise support her self-presentation as a well-known, well-read, and well-traveled professional. Pos' traveling was sponsored by organizations as diverse as KLM, Heineken beer, Wybert cough drops, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She could be an extremely demanding person and oftentimes came across as headstrong, uncompromising, and self-important, as is evident in her correspondence with the White House. Her letters as well as diaries show how she struggled with feelings of insecurity in both the professional and personal spheres, which caused severe mental depressions.

Pos' mission was to travel and meet, write, and lecture, both building connections and earning her own money which she needed being a single woman. Her seven journeys to the US were successful in all these regards. She explored the country and its people by staying in hotels, at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and with acquaintances. She also presented lectures about Europe and the Netherlands at women's clubs, churches, the YWCA, and other organizations, and she was interviewed by US newspapers and featured in American radio programs. Back in the Netherlands, she published several books, including, *Ik zag Amerika* [I saw America] (1940), which was based on her journey to the US in the

Fall and Winter of 1937, *Ik zag Amerika en bezocht het opnieuw* [I saw America and visited again] (1952), and *Californië: Dwars door Amerika op zoek naar Nederlanders* [California: Across America in search of the Dutch] (1955).

The first two books tell of her visits to families of various ethnic and class backgrounds and young people she befriended in Harlem. Her interest in poor urban areas dated back to 1926, when as a secretary for an advertisement firm, she traveled to a commercial conference in London where, she would later claim, she preferred to explore the local slums to being at the posh conference venues. In addition to meeting “ordinary” Americans, Pos arranged interviews with well-known Americans that she knew her Dutch audience back home would enjoy reading and hearing about. These included President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt, industrialist Henry Ford, CIO-President John L. Lewis, the warden of the Sing-Sing prison, Lewis Edward Lawes, and deaf/blind author and activist Helen Keller.

Pos prepared for these meetings in various ways. For her meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, for instance, she dressed up in the “very nice, dark brown coat” and matching little velvet hat or turban, which she had purchased for the occasion. To her Swiss lover, she described the new outfit as “sehr schön mit einen dunkelbraunen voile.”¹⁵ We also know that she had read the “My Day” columns which the president’s wife started to write at the end of 1935.¹⁶ The two women were, each in her own way, engaged in the construction of their public persona.¹⁷ Most important, perhaps, is the fact that both women were involved in building bridges between people and cultures and in doing so moved beyond the gender boundaries of their times. These are the features that Pos stressed most in her *published* accounts of her meetings with Eleanor Roosevelt. However, Pos’ *personal* accounts show that the two women, who themselves were strong advocates of better intercultural communication and understanding, had difficulty connecting during the two press conferences at which they met.

A FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE WHITE HOUSE

The first meeting between Mary Pos and Eleanor Roosevelt is preceded and framed by Pos’ encounter with the president on 21 December 1937 at a White House press conference. She relates of that visit in published work, in lectures held in the Netherlands, and in typed-up, personal notes.¹⁸ This private account of the press conference is much more

gendered than her published one. When she entered the hall, Pos states she found it filled with a multitude of reporters, only three of them were women, whom she describes as “unattractive and dressed in bad taste.” Like the male journalists, the three called out to the president in loud voices. Later on, she would be hindered from coming up closely to the president’s desk, as two women reporters, “both unattractive creatures,” were “thrusting themselves forward.”¹⁹ Irritated by her female colleagues, Mary Pos seems to set herself off against her possible rivals.

At the end of the meeting, Pos was granted some time alone with the president for reasons she does not explicate. Sitting down next to him, it seems that she had already adopted the jolly discourse of the male-dominated press conference. First of all, presenting herself as a collector of signed photo portraits and requesting one of the president’s, she informed him that she would prefer a “genuine” signature, not one copied by one of his officers. This teasing remark, Pos reports in her book, is followed by the president’s hearty laugh.²⁰ Second, when Roosevelt “proudly” informed Pos that his ancestors were from Zeeland and that at heart, he still felt like a Dutchman although his last visit was in 1910, Pos jovially proposed a little vacation without his yacht but with the big steamer *New Amsterdam*, which would take him to old Amsterdam. The otherwise level-headed Dutch would instantly transform into exuberant characters and welcome him with open arms. Encouraged by Roosevelt’s smiling face, Pos then added a third joke: she mischievously inquired whether the two could perhaps already set a date so that she could forewarn her countrymen and—women—to prepare for the visit.²¹ Here, Pos bonded with Roosevelt in two ways. First of all, they shared a history and national heritage and talked about “all that is Dutch in the country, about the great and impressive achievements of the Dutch.”²² Second, the two connected in terms of the (gendered) professional discourse they shared, as Pos shows she was capable of adapting to the talk of her colleagues and the president.

It is difficult to overstate the personal impact of her rendezvous with Roosevelt. When on Friday, 13 April 1945, she received the news of Roosevelt’s death, she wrote in her diary, in some state of shock and in a peculiar logical twist, “But you must keep calm, Mary, just be reminded of how calm Roosevelt himself would cope with such a message and would not let this knock him over. [...] So I behaved calmly and told my family and others.”²³ Only five months later, in September 1945, Mary Pos was involved in a memorial meeting at the Dutch reformed Church in

Doesburg where hundreds of inhabitants, the mayor, aldermen, and the Salvation Army gathered “to commemorate jointly the indefatigable endeavours [sic] for peace and the principles of democracy, for the freedom of the peoples, of the President of the U.S.A. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who departed this life so prematurely.”²⁴ Pos offered a speech about his great merits and was one of those who signed the certificate that, decorated with a windmill, church, boat, and canal, in ornamental letters pronounced one of Doesburg’s streets “Franklin Rooseveltsingel.” The certificate was later, in a leather binder, sent to Roosevelt’s widow.²⁵

Mary Pos also honored FDR in the lectures she presented after the war. Newspaper reviews of such lectures would quote Pos’ pronouncement of Roosevelt’s noble character, his brilliance, his idealism and altruism, and his unwavering Christian faith.²⁶ She subsequently emphasized the benefits of transatlantic connections and the significance of connecting “the virtues of the American people” to “the virtues of the Dutch.”²⁷ “We” should stop just living for ourselves and forget about our own “I,” proclaimed Pos.²⁸ This declaration fits well with Pos’ many platitudes and naïve sermons but also makes plain once again her ambitions of becoming an appreciated citizen diplomat. In that sense, Pos resembled Eleanor Roosevelt who from very early on expressed her commitment to intercultural understanding, as in her “My Day” columns and during her press conferences.²⁹

WOMEN-ONLY PRESS MEETINGS

Between March 1933, when FDR was elected, and April 1945, when he died, Eleanor Roosevelt held 348 women’s only press conferences. At the time Pos attended, in the 1930s, an average number of 20–30 regular reporters were present.³⁰ Apart from these regulars, Roosevelt invited women writers (Mary Pos among them), notables, performers, and artists to the conferences, as well as “woman leaders” such as Mary Anderson, head of the Children’s Bureau, Madame Chiang Kaishek, and Dutch Queen Wilhelmina.³¹ One rationale for organizing the women-only press conferences was Eleanor Roosevelt’s wish to advance the position of American women in general—and female reporters particularly. The other two reasons for holding the conferences were helping establish Roosevelt’s status as First Lady and supporting her husband’s New Deal.³² Roosevelt saw a major role for female newspaper reporters, who could “lead [...] the women in the country to form a general attitude of mind and thought.”

They had to be “interpreters to the women of the country as to what goes on politically in the legislative national life, and also what the social and personal life is at the White House.”³³ Offered this new task, the female reporters attending the conferences gained confidence and recognition.³⁴

Maurine Beasley, who has extensively studied the women’s press conferences, concludes that “In retrospect, the significance of the press conferences lies more, perhaps, in what they conveyed in general regarding women’s position in society than in their specific content.”³⁵ In addition, I would say, they also reflected some of the social complexities of women reporters’ work. Although Roosevelt never let her reporters scoop each other, Allida Black refers to “in-house rivalry between reporters assigned to cover hard news and those assigned to the women’s pages.”³⁶ For the period 1920–1940, Linda Lumsden has shown that women journalists emphasized “succeeding on individual merit” and were involved in an “ardent individualism that carried women to reporting’s top echelons.”³⁷ This attitude may have played a role during Roosevelt’s press conferences, although Beasley also points out the reporters’ camaraderie. Roosevelt herself, reflecting on the press conferences in her autobiography *This I Remember*, refers to the reporters’ “trick questions” and concludes that “Every press conference was a battle of wits, and at times it was not easy for me, or for them, I imagine.”³⁸

The rivalry among the female reporters becomes apparent in Pos’ coverage, in her travel book *Ik zag Amerika* (1940), of her visit to Eleanor Roosevelt’s press conference on 22 December 1937. Relieved to see a smaller number of reporters than at FDR’s press conference, Pos noted that the women reporters crowded by the door in order to be able to “conquer” a good spot, blocking the way for those arriving late until a guard solved the situation. This, she notes, was not “sympathetic.”³⁹ Later on, as all female reporters rushed upstairs, Pos was unable to keep up, and concluded that “this performance under the eyes of the [Negro] servants is foolish.”⁴⁰ Her feelings of triumph over the American press women resound when she proudly states that a reserved seat was available for her on the first row, near the door through which Eleanor Roosevelt would enter: “she would sit right across from me, on the low sofa.”⁴¹ This favorable position may very well be a fictive construction. The front-seat position at the FDR press conference the day before, of which she also relates in her published account, contrasts with the marginal place she found herself in according to her private account.⁴²

Pos spent her time waiting by studying paintings of sailing ships, and a portrait of the president, as well as a piano, book case, and open fire.⁴³ Her detailed portrayal of the room must have had the effect of suspension on at least some of her Dutch readers. With her, they are awaiting Pos' encounter with the American First Lady. But then, without warning, Pos—and implicitly her readers—were caught unaware when, "Suddenly, swift as the wind," Mrs. Roosevelt entered the room. She was in horse-riding costume, and a white silken band held her "grey wavy hair" together.⁴⁴ This is echoed in the photograph that accompanies Pos' article in the Dutch national newspaper *De Telegraaf*, published a few months after her return to the Netherlands.⁴⁵ The picture, taken from a position much higher than Roosevelt and her horse, seemingly has been shot by Pos herself, as if from a window in the waiting area. Pos' written report portrays Roosevelt as tall, slender, and flexible, and with a sportive and natural look. Her naturalness is partially a result of a lack of makeup (in contrast to all reporters present) and partially enhanced by "the smell of the park" which she has brought along from her early horse-riding. Pos concludes by stating that Roosevelt is not attractive, but she has a friendly and lively face.⁴⁶

Mary Pos admired Roosevelt and her self-presentation immediately and was surprised by the informal atmosphere during the conference. She noted the attention the president's wife offered each individual reporter: upon entering the room, she "moves freely, and not in a forced way at all, between reporters and chairs to make sure she has shaken hands with everyone."⁴⁷ During the session, Roosevelt also showed a very personal and "almost jaunty" style: she talked freely, made jokes, laughed out loud, and came across as "natural" and cheerful. Comparing Roosevelt with Dutch women, Pos made up her mind that this mother of six children, who was also a grandmother, was "not at all like Dutch grandmothers."⁴⁸ Pos' feelings of surprise also speak from yet another comparison with Holland: Dutch reporters, Pos knows, would never submit a First Lady to such personal questions. Discussing the American boycott of Japanese goods, the American reporters posed a "cunning" follow-up question, namely whether Roosevelt was planning to buy new silk stockings soon. Mrs. Roosevelt, however, was quick-witted to understand the question straightaway and stated laughingly that she did not need to buy them as she had all she needed.⁴⁹

WOMEN AT WORK AND WOMEN IN THE WORLD

Despite such questions on personal details, the press conferences were no shallow social gatherings about stockings. Indeed, various scholars have pointed out that whereas the contemporary press, dominated by men, labelled the women's conferences as trivial events, they were, in fact, focused on political issues relating to both women and legislation, as well as social issues and personal life at the White House.⁵⁰ The combination of the political and the personal also stands out from one of the questions Mary Pos herself posed during the press conference, namely whether married women should be allowed to work. Pos must have been aware of Roosevelt's adamant stance vis-à-vis married women working. The latter even used her news conferences as a channel to declare wives' rights to work.⁵¹ On a personal level, it seems quite expected that Pos selected the above question about married women's right to work. She had been engaged to a Dutch high-school teacher since 1929, but the two had so far been unable to get married, as Dutch social norms of the time required the husband to be capable of earning a living for the upcoming new family. The issue was eventually one of the reasons why the engagement came to an end after ten years.⁵²

According to Pos' unpublished notes typed up immediately after the interview, Roosevelt did not fully comprehend her question "about the ways in which she could lecture so much and accomplish so much work."⁵³ Pos then repeated the question during the exclusive session following the press conference, to which she and a Finnish female correspondent were invited. Although Pos felt "intensely bothered by this journalist" who "was asking all the questions," she was able to take some notes about the issue that was a weighty one not only for her but also for many of her (female) readers in the Netherlands: "About married women who work, yes, [Roosevelt] gave much money to the poor, was able to do this because husband earned money, many marriages would be impossible if woman would not earn money, as Mother [of young children, Roosevelt] had given herself entirely to mothering."⁵⁴

In her published account of the press conference, in her book *Ik zag Amerika*, Pos eventually pieces together Roosevelt's answer by referring to the economic conditions that necessitated married women's entrance into the labor market and to the unnatural conditions and relations that would arise if a young wife would not be allowed to keep her paid position in order to help earn a living for the family. She concludes her discussion

of the issue by stating that personally Roosevelt felt delighted with the possibilities to lecture and publish, and financially assisted others with the money she earned. Although “Mrs. Roosevelt” originated from a rich family, she had always been interested in the less fortunate, Pos explains, and she had often been distressed by the unjustifiable differences between immense richness and deep poverty. We see here that the personal question stated earlier has led to a somewhat moralizing lecture in which we can no longer differentiate between Roosevelt’s and Pos’ ideas. It therefore suggests Pos’ partial identification with the First Lady.

In the late 1940s, in one of her many lectures for the Dutch, Pos would return to this issue and introduced American women as embodiments of modernity. She noted that married American women, who since the 1930s had had to work outside the home to earn money, were no drudges or victims. Instead, they were admirable and vital, active and industrious, informed and intelligent, adaptable and very interested in life in general, and in the lives of others. The American woman’s “position in life is completely equal to that of a man,” concluded Pos.⁵⁵ Men attentively listened to women and valued their contributions during meetings, Pos said. She added how impressed she was with the institution of the American women’s club, as it enabled and stimulated American women to study, reflect on, and discuss political, economic, and social issues. Many women in these clubs, Pos clarified, were politically active, and in unity they were strong.⁵⁶ Pos then turned to the roles for *Dutch* women, who are “economically far better off” than American women and whose family life is much more “comfortable and peaceful,” and “less restless and hurried” than that of Americans. The “great mission of every woman, and especially the privileged Dutch women [is to] acknowledge the responsibility to help out others who are needy.”⁵⁷ Here, Mary Pos appears to hold up as examples both the American First Lady and herself, as both have always been engaged with the plight of the less fortunate.

This “great mission” to help the needy is the focus of a *second* question that Mary Pos asked at the December 1937 press conference: could European women possibly contribute to peace in Europe? Pos reiterates this question in *Ik zag Amerika*, after which we read that European women have great geographical advantages, as they only need to “find” and “understand” other women across borders and reach out to them. The more they will learn about each other’s history, culture, and national character, the more they will be able to understand each other’s problems. In addition, they also have to pray for each other and for peace. Noteworthy

here is that it is impossible to ascertain whether this recommendation comes from Pos or the First Lady. No quotation marks are used.⁵⁸

Neither does Pos use quotation marks when she discusses a *third* issue she had brought up during the personal rendezvous with Roosevelt following the press conference: Will women eventually rule the world? Women all over the world, writes Pos, are steadily becoming more knowledgeable and entering new fields: "Women in the East are waking up more and more and in countries such as Russia and America, worlds in themselves, women are increasingly taking hold of high-ranking positions, positions which fifty years earlier no one would have dreamt they would occupy."⁵⁹ There are no quotation marks in the text, so for the reader, it is unclear whether this is Pos' introduction of the topic to her readers and the First Lady, or Roosevelt's response. The exposé thus seems to be co-authored by Roosevelt and Pos. In that sense, it is possible that Pos' contemporaries read the exposé as a pep talk. But the latter is cut short when Pos paraphrases Roosevelt as saying that she does *not* believe "that women will ever overrule men. It is true that in some continents women are making immense progress; but the strengthening of one gender does not necessarily mean the weakening of the other. Both will have to work together in harmony and the understanding between the two must grow stronger."⁶⁰

Pos' third query is also mentioned in her *personal* notes, where she points out that Roosevelt "extensively" answered her "question about strong women." Here, however, the emphasis is more on strength than on "harmony" and "understanding": "Roosevelt did not believe that we [...] would enter an age of Amazons. Women were still making progress, albeit slowly, and were growing stronger, but that one sex became stronger did not necessitate the other to diminish in power. Both needed to become ever stronger. *Something like this.*"⁶¹

The last sentence suggests that Pos attempts to translate Roosevelt's monologue, but feels unsure about the argument. Roosevelt herself indicated that Pos had some trouble understanding her: in her column "My Day," she writes that the two foreign correspondents (who based on Pos' reports must have been the Finnish journalist and herself) wished to accurately depict the US, but felt confused: "I think it must be a tremendously difficult thing to find yourself trying to grasp political and social situations at the present time with a somewhat limited knowledge of the country."⁶² Roosevelt, here, expresses her empathy with the position of the foreign journalists, but at the same time has her doubts about the abilities of the ambitious and "attractive young women" to "write truthfully."⁶³

The “somewhat limited knowledge” Roosevelt refers to in her column is ironically echoed in Pos’ published travel account *Ik zag Amerika*, where she admonishes her readers to shed the restricted lens through which Europeans sometimes view the US. She fails, however, to consequently reflect on her own limited vision as a Dutch journalist visiting the country. In her book, Pos paraphrases Roosevelt as follows: “Naturally there were many things in America that those in Europe did not understand, but one should not attempt to look through European spectacles. Emil Ludwig had done exactly that! His book on the President [*Roosevelt: Studie über Glück und Macht*, 1938] had been written by someone who had been transfixed in the European tradition.” She then offers an exact quote from the First Lady: “Whoever wishes to understand America should not limit themselves to New-York [sic] and Washington, but should also venture into the Mid-West and Far West and certainly also into the South, where the results of slavery are still noticeable in the problem of the colored population, fully affecting southern life, pushing down the living standard.”⁶⁴

The use of the exclamation mark, and the “should not’s” and “should,” suggest that this is not merely a response provided at a press conference, but an instruction in itself. Roosevelt’s didactic style has been commented on by many. Maurine Beasley claims in her book on Roosevelt’s press conferences that Roosevelt performed as an instructor who informed the journalists on such things as how to teach women how to read a newspaper (15 June 1933) and on using a salutary new product, dried skim milk (7 May 1935).⁶⁵ Beasley further points out that Roosevelt “used the conferences to lecture on women’s duties as citizens.”⁶⁶ In her biography, Allida Black even refers to Eleanor Roosevelt as conducting classes and “deliver[ing] a tutorial.”⁶⁷ Mary Pos clearly recognized, appreciated, and even copied this educational and somewhat moralizing practice.

Significantly, her presentation of the advice does not make it clear whether it is she or Roosevelt who cautions and chides. This also holds for her other recommendations. Approximately ten years later, in a postwar lecture Pos held for her Dutch audience, Pos almost literally reiterated Roosevelt’s earlier recommendation that women and men should work together in harmony and understanding. She yet again seemed to mix her own text with that of Roosevelt as she, reporting on their conversation, offered a “passionate plea” for a “shoulder-to-shoulder and conjoint battle by both men and women,” to triumph over the injustices of the times and help the tens of thousands of victims struggling with the results of the

war.⁶⁸ Pos apparently employed Roosevelt's words as a vehicle to both generate feelings of national solidarity and trigger the emancipation of Dutch women whose status, according to Pos, had been weakened and whose assistance was not employed effectively in the postwar reconstruction of the country: Dutch women had been systematically excluded from boards and committees, and they had therefore not been able to help make decisions in the best interests of women. In conclusion, although we have no verbatim account of what Roosevelt communicated to Pos in December 1937, the Dutch journalist certainly drew on that meeting to convey to her Dutch postwar audience a strong message regarding the need for national cohesion and a strong position for women.

ROOSEVELT'S CAUTIOUS AND PRAGMATIC DIPLOMACY

Pos' personal notes testify to the degree of diplomacy and accuracy Roosevelt used with European reporters. The Finnish colleague, whom Pos describes as "an enormous showoff who dared a lot and was very cunning," asked questions about labor, capital, and government that "a woman like Mrs. Roosevelt could impossibly answer. Impossibly." Pos indicates having been impressed with the way in which Roosevelt took to answer, time and again, the Finnish reporter's "daring questions." However, the First Lady did not come up with anything "shockingly new" and she actually offered, concludes Pos, what anyone who is only a little informed about the American conditions already knew.⁶⁹ Pos' notes end with referring to the Finnish reporter once again, who after the session confided in Pos that Roosevelt "could not be caught articulating an irresponsible statement." Pos then appropriates the Finnish reporter's conclusion and states in her *published* account of the meeting, *Ik zag Amerika*, that Roosevelt never hesitated when giving her answers, but that no answer was careless.⁷⁰ Ironically, this anticipates an incident at the chic Amstel Hotel in Amsterdam, years later, in the summer of 1950, which is discussed next.

In June 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt visited the Netherlands as one of the European countries that received Marshall Aid. Pos' report of the press conference held at the exclusive Amstel Hotel in Amsterdam is integrated in a one-page diary entry dated 5 July 1950, which refers to Roosevelt as "that unsympathetic business woman Roosevelt."⁷¹ It is unclear exactly why Pos described Roosevelt in such strong terms and what caused her change of heart, as she had formerly partially identified with her and her

ideas. From the remainder of the diary entry, we may infer that feelings of depression, and the way she is dealt with by her colleagues following the press conference, effected this labeling of the former First Lady. In addition, her negative judgment of Roosevelt may also be related to the latter's unwillingness to respond to her demand for help to the Moluccan island of Ambon.

On 25 April 1950, the Moluccan people had proclaimed the Republik Maluku Selatan (Republic of the South Moluccas; RMS), severing ties with both East Indonesia, the state to which they as a province belonged, and the federal United States of Indonesia, the Republik Indonesia Serikat.⁷² They feared the centralizing force of the federal state and the threat of Indonesian troops in East Indonesia. Moluccan representatives, both in Indonesia and in the Netherlands, urged political figures and institutions to take action. On 2 May 1950, for instance, a group of South Moluccans in the Netherlands sent a telegram to Trygve Lie, the Norwegian Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), to inform him of acts of aggression on the part of the federal state that had started to establish a blockade of the Ambonese islands. Anxious about new East-West tensions, and facing the 25 June 1950 invasion of South Korea by North Korea, the UN at first was reluctant to interfere in Indonesia. The United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCI), installed by the Security Council in 1949, also saw it as inappropriate to take action without first being approached in the matter by at least one of the parties involved.⁷³ The UNCI did undertake attempts to encourage the Indonesian government to join a process of negotiation, but the latter saw the conflict as an internal affair.

Although the Dutch government never acknowledged the RMS, a large part of the Dutch population felt sympathetic toward the South Moluccans. Thus, Eleanor Roosevelt, in line with her practice of citizen diplomacy, and like other public officials, received several appeals from Ambonese living in the Netherlands and Dutch citizens who supported the Moluccan case. One is a letter written by the *Gemeenschappelijke Actie van Nederlandse Vrouwen* ("Joint Action of Netherlands Women") on 17 June 1950. Under the motto "Direction is everything. Distance is nothing," and signed by "Presidentess" Wilhelmina van't Rood-Gerth van Wijk, the letter urged Roosevelt to use all her influence so that justice can "take its course unhampered," and that the Moluccans, "for the greater part Christians," could determine their own future.⁷⁴

The second appeal came disguised as a hand-written card and bouquet of flowers, offered to Roosevelt by a small delegation of Ambonese women upon her visit of the Zealand town of Oud-Vossemeer on 20 June 1950, where quite a few inhabitants claimed to be descendants of the late president. On the card, one member of the delegation, Mabel Ruybrechts, had added to her signature “Whose father is still in Amboina.” The other “Wifes, widows [sic] and daughters” had written that their “native country ... is in distress” and explain that the Dutch had collected money, but that they now needed the permission of the UN to send it to “our folks at home.”⁷⁵

A third letter was co-written and signed by Mary Pos. Dated 16 June 1950, the document addresses Roosevelt as the “Champion for the Human Rights,” and highlights the role of the Ambonese, who had always been loyal allies of the Netherlands and during the Second World War played a significant role in the resistance movement on the Indonesian island of Java and elsewhere. It argues that it would be a violation of “the right of Self-Determination” and would go against the moral principles of “the International Community” if the United Nations would not help out the Ambonese in their legal fight for freedom. “If this group of Christians should be abandoned by the United Nations in their struggle for freedom, these peoples will be [sic] certainly be cruelly oppressed by the Mahommedans [sic] of the Republic of Indonesia.”⁷⁶

“In the name of Christianity,” the letter’s authors beg Roosevelt to use her influence to help their fellow Christians, the Ambonese, by providing food and medicines. If Roosevelt would grant them an interview of ten minutes, they would be able to explain what is going on at “Amboina.” The signatories besides Mary Pos include two noblewomen, one of whom is a prisoner of war, a female professor in the English language, an ex-member of the Underground Movement of the Royal Netherlands Army, and the president of the New Guinea Netherlands Women Association who is also a former member of the Underground Movement of the Royal Netherlands East Indian Army.⁷⁷ Of course, it was rather clever of the writers to refer to Christianity. They must have known that Eleanor Roosevelt was a religious person and practicing Christian, although she was as well respectful of other religions.⁷⁸

It is unclear whether and how Eleanor Roosevelt responded to this letter, or to the two messages requesting support.⁷⁹ We do know that she had been enthused about Indonesian independence but had also become worried about the situation of the postcolonial state. Almost exactly three

years prior to the signing of the treaty of The Hague on 27 December 1949, which granted Indonesia independence and installed the Netherlands-Indonesia Union, Roosevelt had written in her daily column: "One of the most cheerful things I have read in a long while is the actual, gradual plan of a United States of Indonesia being formed under Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands. It is the carrying out of the plan which I remember hearing her talk over with my husband when he was President, and it should bring gradual independence and the opportunity to develop self-government to all the peoples of the Indonesian area."⁸⁰ On the day on which the ratification took place, she had written in "My Day" that it would not be "all plain sailing" for the new Indonesian government. "Their immediate needs are going to be difficult to supply, and there will appear among their own people extremists who will probably try to bring about disturbances here and there, or even a real revolution. There has been, and perhaps will continue to be, a certain amount of guerrilla warfare. All of this is not easy for a new nation to face."⁸¹ This means that as early as 1949, she anticipated complex disputes in the area, and she was aware of the complexities of the local situation. Other than this, her stance on the Moluccan dispute remains unclear.

Likewise, none of Mary Pos' published work clarifies her own stand on the Moluccan issue. Neither do we know whether she was aware of, and how she assessed, America's role in the history of Indonesian independence. Pos had visited the Dutch East Indies since the 1930s and had published several books based on those travels. She had also built a significant network of friends and acquaintances in Indonesia.

Her travel experience, her international network, and her background knowledge of the Dutch East Indies may have strengthened her decision to insist on the "daring" questions she posed Eleanor Roosevelt at the Amsterdam press conference in June 1950: could Roosevelt, as a member of the UN Commission, possibly use her influence to generate support from the International Red Cross for Ambon? Roosevelt did not answer Pos. In the case of Indonesia, she may indeed not have wanted to become involved in such a controversial question, neither going against the US government's view, alienating the Dutch government, or preceding any UNCI decisions. This seems related to the fact that in much of what Roosevelt did, there was a large element of not only idealism but also pragmatism.

Pos' action, she states in her diary, was not tolerated by her colleagues from the "Red and papal gang," partially due to feelings of jealousy. She

had therefore suffered “from folks I had never seen before” and also from the “papal Marijke Vetter,” a journalist of the *Volkskrant*, whom Pos describes as “small, fat, arrogant, and jealous.” Pos does not explicate what she means by “suffered from,” but we may perhaps infer that this included verbal abuse, gossip, or giving dirty looks.⁸²

Her intervention at the press conference, she conveys, furthermore engendered an “unfair piece” in the Dutch weekly paper *Vrij Nederland*, fitting with the “lowest way” in which “bright red” had “oftentimes attacked her.” Here, Pos probably refers to her affair with *Het Parool*, a formerly clandestine resistance newspaper which, in the Summer of 1945, after a study of Pos’ published reports on her trip to the Ostmark in 1940, had inaccurately accused Pos of journalistic collaboration with the Nazis. The *Parool* issue, which motivated the Military Authority to forbid her to write, would greatly affect her professional standing and seriously damage her career. Still, Pos was rehabilitated that same year, and in addition, she was invited to travel to Switzerland to present lectures on the Dutch resistance movement. It was perhaps a jealous colleague who upon her return sent her an anonymous and hateful letter labeling her “the incorrect missionary.”⁸³

The “unfair piece” in *Vrij Nederland* following Pos’ query at the Amstel Hotel is one section in a front-page editorial called “In het vizier” [In sight].⁸⁴ It declares the failure of both the reception held in honor of Mrs. Roosevelt and the succeeding press conference. The ambiance had been somewhat cold, snobbish, and chaotic, and Roosevelt was “charming,” but her book-signing session took too long, leaving no time for “Amsterdam” to become acquainted with her “life work.”⁸⁵ In addition, there had not been much time left for the press conference, which was attended not just by members of the press but also by some lingering guests. Topping all of that was “Miss Mary Pos, who at times treads onto the slippery ice of journalism with her graceful little shoes.”⁸⁶ The Dutch expression of treading onto slippery ice, meaning taking risks, is here reproduced with a gender-biased and belittling slant.

This patronizing and chauvinist tone continues in the remainder of the editorial. Pos had posed the “accusing” question why Mrs. Roosevelt had not personally taken action in the case of Ambon. With a smile Roosevelt had apologized, stating “Because that is not my job, do you see?” This is taken up by the (unnamed, but presumably male) editor of *Vrij Nederland* who concludes that “Miss Mary Pos” did not “see” this like all others present. This caused such a commotion against Pos after Roosevelt’s

departure, the editor claims, that Pos disappeared from the venue with a “quickness that did not match her self-confidence.”⁸⁷

The incident at the Amstel Hotel is also covered by other newspapers that blame Pos for her embarrassing and disgraceful act and praise Roosevelt for weighing each question scrupulously and for the skills and tact with which she refuted Pos’ inappropriate questions. One reporter stated that Pos more or less “demanded of the Commission of Human Rights to provide accountability.” Another wrote that Roosevelt, “an extremely intelligent woman,” who was knowledgeable about Ambon’s current situation and a “natural diplomat,” could not be lured into impulsive answers to Pos’ “inappropriate question” about the possible effect of the petitions signed for Ambon, which were submitted to the United Nations Organization.⁸⁸ When Pos pressed Roosevelt to “employ your personal influence at the support of millions of people,” Roosevelt only “briefly smiled, charmingly and humbly, upon which she merely stated: ‘In the United Nations I have little personal influence.’”⁸⁹ Ironically, the chauvinistic comments Mary Pos received about not being fit to be so outspoken echo the criticisms Eleanor Roosevelt had oftentimes heard about her being unfit, as a First Lady, to be meddling in politics and being so forthright and frank. According to her biographers, “She was frequently chastised for not knowing her place as a woman or how to dignify the role of the First Lady.”⁹⁰

Noteworthy is that one of the newspapers critical of Pos’ act includes on the very same page, in a next column, an article about Pos having been involved in another, but very different, scene. “Do you still remember Mary Pos? As a journalist she repeatedly visited, toured, and reported of Indonesia.” Recently, the column reports, she was summoned in court for parking in a pedestrian zone. When the judge resolved the case by offering either a small fine or two days in prison, Pos stated that for her it was easy to decide: being in jail would provide her with a splendid opportunity to write an account of incarcerated life. In the midst of great merriment, she left the courtroom.⁹¹

The Dutch writer Mary Pos was one among a group of American and European female journalists who in the 1930s and 1940s strove to find her way into the male bastion of journalism. Many gatekeepers played a role in this process, for instance, by agreeing to be interviewed, acting as intermediators, writing positive reviews of their work, and functioning as role models and sources of inspiration. Both Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt had such an impact on Mary Pos. They allowed her to

attend their press conferences and had personal sessions with her. Their work and their lives inspired the once small-town Dutch journalist and offered examples of the public persona in which Pos could mirror herself.

However, whereas at least according to her own travel narratives, Pos was able to bond with FDR in terms of jovial conversation and shared ethnic-national background, this was not so with Eleanor Roosevelt. Although Pos' published work suggests that they fully agreed on issues such as women's roles and intercultural understanding—indeed, in Pos' *Ik zag Amerika*, the two women seem to speak as one—her personal accounts show that they, at times, had trouble understanding each other. However, in the late 1930s and 1940s, the two women were similarly engaged in activities that confirm as well as challenge existing gender expectations and versions of institutionalized femininity in the patriarchal models of early to mid-twentieth-century US and the Netherlands. Each worked within, but also stretched, the boundaries of their own gendered maneuvering space—one as (former) First Lady and chairwoman of the UN Commission on Human Rights and one as female journalist. Both women had to negotiate with various discourses of femininity available to them at the time, with biases and expectations. Both supported a resilient role for women in making connections with men, and between countries and cultures. Although Roosevelt operated on a much more global and political level, and with an entirely different set of tools and means, and although she had a far greater and much more civic and diplomatic reach than Pos, both women questioned and affected ideas of national and gender identity among those who made up their audience.

Pos changed her original positive assessment of Eleanor Roosevelt into a rather unfavorable one. In addition, she seems to have felt alienated and marginalized among the self-assured, ambitious, and modern women she met during press conferences organized by or for the Roosevelts. This was partially caused by the competitive attitude of her colleagues and cultural differences but also perhaps by her own provincial and orthodox religious background, her somewhat naïve and stubborn stance, as well as her lack of tact and inadequate knowledge of world politics. She also seems to have been unaware of the various forces and interests Eleanor Roosevelt had to carefully negotiate when she was a UN representative, limiting the extent to which Roosevelt was always able, as she had wished, “to give expression and voice to the questions posed by American and European civic associations and their commitment to democracy, social justice, and human rights in the growing Cold War climate.”⁹²

NOTES

1. Letter from Mary Pos to Mrs. Roosevelt, 3 December 1937, Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945, Series 110: Autographs, Container 863, 1938 N-Q, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
2. Beasley, Maurine H., ed. 1983. *The White House Press Conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt*. New York & London: Garland, 1983, x.
3. Letter from Mary Pos to Mrs. Roosevelt, 3 December 1937.
4. Stephen T. Early was FDR's press secretary.
5. Letter from P.L. Shannon, The White House, to Mrs. Scheider, 8 December 1937, Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945, Series 170: Appointments, Container 1185, 1937 P, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
6. Letter from Mary Pos to Mrs. Scheider, 16 December 1937, Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945, Series 110: Autographs, Container 863, 1938 N-Q, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
7. These pictures would later be added to her collection of signed photos, which would in the 1970s still adorn one wall in her Dutch apartment in Rijswijk, the Netherlands.
8. Letter from Mary Pos to Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 January 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945, Series 110: Autographs, Container 863, 1938 N-Q, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
9. "Hollander Finds Us Too Serious: Mary Pos, Writer, Wonders at Few Laughing Faces in midst of Holiday Brightness. Roosevelts the 'Gayest,'" undated *New York Times* article, included in letter from Mary Pos to Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 January 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945.
10. To top this published expression of admiration, the letter stated that during her upcoming radio interview while still in the US, she would not be able to do anything else "but speak about the impression you made upon me, too." Letter from Mary Pos to Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 January 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945, Series 110: Autographs, Container 863, 1938 N-Q, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY. Mary Pos must have been aware of the First Lady's engagement with radio broadcasting.
11. Whether Mrs. Roosevelt actually signed the photo is not entirely clear. At the top of Pos' letter of request, a short and barely legible note is written in pencil, which seems to read: "The photo was signed by your sect." Letter by E. Miller of Harris and Ewing Photographers of National

- Notables to Malvina Scheider, 23 December 1938 [1937]; letter from Malvina Scheider to Mary Pos, 31 December 1939. Both letters are from Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence 1933–1945, Series 110: Autographs, Container 863, 1938 N-Q, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
12. Mary Pos, diary entry 5 July 1950, Folder 45 (Diaries 1945–1952), Mary Pos Papers, Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism (1800 to the present day), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
 13. The main primary sources of this chapter consist of Pos' correspondence, diary entries, personal and lecture notes, and reviews of lectures that make up part of the Mary Pos Papers housed by the Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism (1800 to the present day) (HDC), affiliated with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
 14. For a discussion of the term citizen diplomat, see Baritono, Raffaella. 2017. Eleanor Roosevelt at the United Nations: "Diplomacy from Below" and the Search for a New Transatlantic Dialogue. *European Journal of American Studies*, 12:1. Document 6. <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/11920>. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.11920>
 15. Letter from Mary Pos to Walter, Tuesday, 21 December 1937, Washington, Folder 10 (Correspondence), Mary Pos Papers, HDC.
 16. Pos, Mary. 1940. *Ik zag Amerika*. Amsterdam: De Lange, 240.
 17. "Persona" here refers to Mineke Bosch's work on the performance of public identity. She has theorized this in "Persona en de performance van identiteit: Parallele ontwikkelingen in de nieuwe biografische geschiedschrijving van gender en van wetenschap," *Tijdschrift voor biografie* (Fall 2012) 1:3, 10–21.
 18. Mary Pos, diary entry 21 December 1937, Folder 43 (Diaries 1936–1938), Mary Pos Papers, HDC.
 19. Mary Pos, "Pers conferentie President Roosevelt, 21 Dec. 1937." Folder 43 (Diaries 1936–1938), Mary Pos Papers, HDC; Pos, *Ik zag*, 221.
 20. The signed photo portrait will later be included in a photo in which Pos poses next to a wall in her Dutch home covered with photo portraits, pointing at the photo of FDR. See image 1. "Vijf Werelddelen dragen haar voetstap: In een huis vol herinneringen woont Nederlands meest bereisde vrouw [Five continents hold her foot step: In a home filled with memories lives Mary Pos, the most travelled woman of the Netherlands]," n.d., n.p., Folder 64 (Interviews with Mary Pos, Typescripts and Interviews 1940–1941, 1949, 1963, n.d.), Mary Pos Papers, HDC.
 21. Pos, *Ik zag*, 222.
 22. Ibid.
 23. Mary Pos, diary entry Friday 13 April 1945, "Roosevelt dood [Roosevelt dead]," Folder 45 (Diaries 1945–1952), Mary Pos Papers, HDC.

24. Certificate, signed by Mary Pos, Doesburg, the Netherlands, 17 September 1945, Eleanor Roosevelt Photographs, Album 122, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
25. Author's translation.
26. See, for example, “Franklin D. Roosevelt.” *De Waarheid Dordrecht*, 30 January 1946, and “Amerika en President Roosevelt: Een onvergetelijke avond [America and President Roosevelt: An Unforgettable Evening],” both reviews in Folder 57 (Reviews of *Ik zag Amerika*), Mary Pos Papers, HDC. See also “Mary Pos sprak over Amerika en Roosevelt [Mary Pos spoke about America and Roosevelt],” typed manuscript for *Dordtsch Dagblad*, 30 January 1946, Folder 51 (Newspaper clippings 1940–1949), Mary Pos Papers, HDC.
27. Amerika en President Roosevelt.
28. Mary Pos sprak over Amerika.
29. For an early example of Roosevelt's discussion of the issue of intercultural understanding, see “My Day,” 25 November 1939. https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/documents/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1939&_f=md055433, Accessed 19 February 2019.
30. Beasley, *The White House Press Conferences*, 2.
31. Idem, x.
32. Maurine H. Beasley, “The Press Conference of Eleanor Roosevelt,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Corvallis, OR, 6–9 August 1983, 1.
33. Ibid., 7.
34. Beasley, “The Press Conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt,” 1; Black quoted in Beasley, “The Press Conferences of Eleanor Roosevelt,” 4.
35. Ibid., 2.
36. Black, *Casting*, 25.
37. Lumsden, Linda. 1995. ‘You’re a Tough Guy, Mary—And a First-Rate Newspaperman’: Gender and Women Journalists in the 1920s and 1930s. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 72, 4: 913–921. This also holds for the few Dutch female journalists who were on the dailies’ payroll: during the 1930s, they had no time for collective feminist actions, and they did not see any point in it: “each struggled for herself” (Elias, Mirjam. 1986. Voor zover plaats aan de perstafel: Honderd jaar vechten om een plaats te veroveren. In *Voor zover plaats aan de perstafel: Vrouwen in de dagbladjournalistiek, vroeger en nu*, eds. Els Diekerhof, Mirjam Elias, Marjan Sax. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 25.
38. Eleanor Roosevelt, *This I Remember* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 103.
39. Pos, *Ik zag*, 224.

40. Ibid. Pos uses the Dutch term “negerbedienden.” Ann Cootrell Free, one of the regulars at the press conferences, recalls years later “how women reporters rushed up the White House stairs in an unseemly dash for front-row seats in the second-floor Monroe Room” (Beasley, Maurine H. 2010. *Transformative First Lady*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 88).
41. Pos, *Ik zag*, 224. Pos does not make clear whether other (female) foreign correspondents were granted a seat up front.
42. Reporting on her attendance of the presidential press conference, Pos states in her *personal* notes that she is not allowed to enter the “special door” for the foreign press but has to find her way to the press room with all the other reporters. In her *published* account, however, she has altered this awkward situation and states that upon arrival of the president, when all reporters rushed to the door that would open to the president’s study, she is allowed to enter another door: “[...] otherwise I would never have been able to see even a glimpse of President Roosevelt, as the others were crowding into the President’s desk. Now I was offered a seat on the first row.” Pos, *Ik zag*, 235. Apparently, having her Dutch audience in mind, Pos wishes to create a public persona that occupies a special place during presidential press conferences.
43. Other women writers who attended Eleanor Roosevelt’s conferences have similarly described the place, such as Knapp, Sally. 1949. *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Biography*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 97.
44. Pos, *Ik zag*, 225.
45. Pos, Mary. 1938. Bij de First Lady van de Ver. [sic] Staten: Een vrouw, die zichzelf durft te zijn. [with the First Lady of the US: A woman who dares to be herself]. *De Telegraaf* 17 April 1938.
46. Pos on occasion described first ladies as simple, as is the case when she portrays Mrs. Elizabeth Verwoerd Schoonbee, the South African Prime Minister’s wife when she visits the couple in the 1960s. Mary Pos. 1968. *Wie was Dr. Verwoerd?* Utrecht: De Banier, 125.
47. Mary Pos, “vervolg conferentie Mrs. Roosevelt.” Folder 55 (Typescripts of articles and lectures 1948 and n.d.),” Mary Pos Papers, HDC.
48. Pos, *Ik zag*, 225.
49. Ibid., 226.
50. Cook, Blanche Wiesen. 2000. Introduction. *Eleanor Roosevelt: Vol 2, The Defining Years, 1933–1938*. New York: Penguin; Beasley, *White House Press Conferences*, 1, 3–4.; Beasley, *Transformative*, 97; Black, Allida M. 1996. *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1996, 25.
51. Caroli, Betty Boyd. 2010. *First Ladies: From Martha Washington to Michelle Obama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 195. Eleanor Roosevelt

- would continue to do so in later years; see Binker, Mary Jo, ed. 2018. *If You Ask Me: Essential Advice from Eleanor Roosevelt*. New York: Atria Books.
52. During those years, Pos had several lovers, including the Swiss one mentioned above. Pos was not a believer in sex radicalism, as, for example, defined by Mary K. Trigg in *Feminism as Life's Work: Four Modern American Women Through Two World Wars* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2014). Pos' diaries indicate that she felt rather guilty about her secret love affairs, but when reproached about her infidelity, she would retort that she would negotiate with God later on. It seems that most of those who read Pos' work and attended her lectures were not aware of her love life. Pos' successful career appears not to have suffered from rumors about such private details.
 53. Pos, "vervolg conferentie Mrs. Roosevelt."
 54. Ibid.
 55. Mary Pos, undated and untitled lecture on "het leven van de vrouw in Amerika [woman's life in America]," Folder 55, Box 8: Typescripts of articles and lectures, 1948; n.d.
 56. Pos, undated and untitled lecture.
 57. Pos, undated and untitled lecture. Pos does not mention here that at this time Dutch women still had to deal with household shortages, low wages, and other Reconstruction problems.
 58. Pos, *Ik zag*, 240.
 59. Pos, *Ik zag*, 239.
 60. Ibid.
 61. Emphasis added. Pos, "vervolg conferentie Mrs. Roosevelt." In none of her written work does Pos use the term "age of Amazons," neither has she otherwise referred to a matriarchal or utopian place. I therefore tentatively assume this is Roosevelt's phrase.
 62. Eleanor, Roosevelt. 1937. "My Day," 23 December 1937, <http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?Y=1937&f=md054831>. Accessed 26 February 2019.
 63. She does not mention any language barriers, but we know from personal sources that Pos felt insecure about her fluency in English.
 64. Pos, *Ik zag*, 240
 65. Beasley, *The White House Press Conferences*, 16, 25.
 66. Beasley, *Transformative*, 98.
 67. Black, *Casting*, 25–26. In this sense, the press conferences showed an interesting dynamic of reciprocity: whereas Roosevelt saw her job partially as educating her "press girls" (Beasley, *The White House Press Conferences*, 1), many reporters in their turn supported Roosevelt, and "some actively helped her avoid awkward situations by coming to her defense if questions

- seemed hostile. They saw her as naïve and in need of their protection,” Beasley, *Transformative*, 112, 88–89.
68. Pos, undated and untitled lecture.
 69. Pos, “vervolg conferentie Mrs. Roosevelt.”
 70. Pos, *Ik zag*, 227.
 71. Mary Pos, diary entry 5 July 1950, Folder 45 (Diaries 1945–1952), Mary Pos Papers, HDC.
 72. Parker, Karen. 2019. *Republik Maluku: The Case for Self-determination A Briefing Paper of Humanitarian Law Project International Educational Development and Association of Humanitarian Lawyers*. Presented to The United Nations Commission on Human Rights 1996 Session March Geneva. www.republikmalukuselatan.nl. Accessed 12 July 2019. See also Chauvel, Richard. 1990. *Nationalists, Soldiers and Separatists: The Ambonese Island from Colonialism to Revolt, 1880–1950*. Leiden, KITLV, Chapter XVIII.
 73. Parker, *Republik*, 12; Smeets, Henk and Fridus Steijlen. 2006. In *Nederland gebleven: De geschiedenis van Molukkers 1951–2006*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker and Moluks Historisch Museum 2006, 48.
 74. Letter from Gemeenschappelijke Actie van Nederlandse Vrouwen to Eleanor Roosevelt, 17 June 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt Trip File 1950. Box 1991. *File: European Trip 1950, Holland*. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.
 75. Hoog bezoek aan Oud-Vossemeer: Mevrouw Roosevelt werd een hartelijke ontvangst bereid. 1950. *Eilandennieuws* June 24, <http://www.oud-vossemeer.com/roos1.htm#.WBvsY8IAFf4>. Accessed 12 July 2019. See also *Nieuwe Leidsche Courant* 21 June 1950.
 76. Letter about Ambon signed by Mary Pos and others, Eleanor Roosevelt Trip File 1950. Box 1991. *File: European Trip 1950, Holland*. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY
 77. Ibid.
 78. See, for instance, https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1948&_f=md001146. Accessed 26 February 2019.
 79. I have only found one (published) source where Roosevelt seems to have actively supported a Moluccan appeal for assistance, but that was later. In the early 1960s, she wrote a letter to Adlai Stevenson, enclosing a plea from the South Moluccas, stating: “I seem to be swamping you with letters & I apologize for taking your time.” Richard Henry, *Eleanor Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson*, Series: The World of the Roosevelts (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 203.
 80. Roosevelt, Eleanor. 1946. “My Day,” 27 December 1946. https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1946&_f=md000532. Accessed 12 July 2019.

81. Roosevelt, Eleanor. 1949. “My Day,” 29 December 1949. https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1949&_f=md001475. Accessed 12 July 2019.
82. Mary Pos, diary entry 5 July 1950.
83. <https://ilibrariania.wordpress.com/2012/01/04/mary-pos-1904-1987-de-eerste-vrouwelijke-reisjournaliste>. Accessed 19 February 2019.
84. The discussed editorial or column titled “In het vizier” was possibly written by Johan Winkler (1898–1986), who was chief editor of *Vrij Nederland* starting in 1950. Henk van Randwijk, who was chief editor until Winkler took over in 1950, is most certainly not the author. He and Pos were both members of a Protestant Christian authors’ society (Christelijke Auteurskring), had jointly contributed to a collection of poetry (*Verzeild bestek: Uitgave ter gelegenheid van het tweede lustrum van den christelijken auteurskring 1929–1939*, 1939, red. G. Kamphuis et al. Kampen: Kok Publishers 1939), and had supported Pos when *Het Parool* accused her of collaboration with the Nazis in the summer of 1945.
85. “In het vizier,” 1.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. *De Tijd* 106:3, 20 June 1950, 3. Notities uit Nederland, AID “*De Preanger Bode*,” Tuesday 4 July 1950, 1. Beasley discusses Eleanor Roosevelt’s media training, which included guidance in not being impulsive (Beasley, Maurine H. 1987. *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media: A Public Quest for Self-Fulfillment*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 42).
89. Ibid.
90. Beasley, Maurine H., Holly C. Shulman, and Henry R. Beasley, eds. 2001. *The Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT, London: Greenwood Press, 118. See also Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, Vol. 2.
91. Ibid.
92. Baritono, Eleanor Roosevelt at the United Nations, 18.